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23 March 1963

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Conversation with Department of Defense Regarding Senator Stuart Symington's Use of Percentages in Discussing Soviet Missiles

1. On Saturday, 23 March 1963, I received a call from the Watch Office regarding an inquiry directed to the Agency by Commander Monagan, in the Security Review Staff of Defense. Commander Monagan indicated that the Senate Armed Services Committee required an answer today on a matter which he felt should be cleared with this Agency.

2. I called Commander Monagan and learned that the matter involved a statement by Senator Stuart Symington in the course of Secretary McNamara's briefing of the Senate Armed Services Committee on 20 February. Symington's statement was as follows: "On This Committee between February 1960 and August 1961, 18 months, an able, dedicated American, Allen Dulles, reduced his estimate of the number of ICBMs on launching pads available in Russia blank percent. He did not cut it 10 or 20, he reduced it blank percent" (Commander Monagan eliminated the specific percentages since our conversation was by telephone.) The Department of Defense in sanitizing the transcript deleted this statement.

3. Senator Symington has taken issue with the Defense Department on this, indicating that the percentages have been released and made public. Bill Darden, of the Armed Services Committee staff, is pressing Defense on this issue since the Committee is anxious to get the sanitized version to GPO on Saturday. Commander Monagan said he felt this involved an intelligence matter which should be passed on by this Agency. I advised Monagan that I was aware of the fact that Senator Symington had used these percentages in various speeches and press releases but I was not aware of any clearance of this matter by CIA. I told Monagan I would look into the situation and be in touch with him.



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4. I talked with Darden about this and Darden seemed quite incensed that Defense had made the deletion, for in Darden's opinion, the Department of Defense had no authority to strike a Senator's statement from the record. Darden suggested I talk with Jim Gehrig, on Symington's staff, about the matter. I talked with Gehrig by telephone at his home. Gehrig seemed quite surprised that this had assumed such proportions. We reviewed the pros and cons of the consequences of the release of a percentage figure (I pointed out that if the opposition had in its possession an original ICBM estimate that quoted a percentage figure was tantamount to this giving the opposition the revised estimate.). Gehrig agreed that there were some dangers involved but said he had raised these questions back in 1960 and 1961 before the Senator's statements on the missile gap were made. He said the decision to use the percentages was made at "a level higher than mine." I advised Gehrig that the only thing I wished to make clear was that to the best of my knowledge, CIA had never released or cleared the release of the percentage figures.

5. I attempted to reach Darden later in the day, but he had left his office. On Monday, I called him and told him of my conversation with Gehrig indicating that these figures were in the public domain (they had been quoted in a REPORTER magazine article), and we saw no reason for reviewing the wisdom of that decision at this time. I then repeated what I had said to Gehrig regarding the Agency clearing the use of the percentages. Darden said he understood completely and had no quarrel with us. He said it had been decided between the Committee and DOD that Senator Symington's statement would remain in the published transcript.



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